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The latest corporate technology news

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Lawson Software set to be bought by rival Infor

Hunter turns prey. **Lawson Software**, a mid-range enterprise software vendor, looks set to be acquired by bigger US rival Infor for \$1.8bn in cash. The unsolicited bid, if successful, would create the industry's third-largest enterprise software player behind Oracle and SAP, and the largest vendor focused on mid-market companies. It also marks the end-game in the decade-long consolidation of the mid-range enterprise software industry. The advent of cloud computing means that the industry's traditional business model is coming under threat. Mid-range vendors with mature products and a heavy dependence on maintenance revenues have most to lose from this fundamental shift. Lawson denies that it has been slow to react to the changing landscape. Its 2005 acquisition of Swedish rival Intentia helped transform the company and last year it belatedly tried to jump aboard the cloud bandwagon with the launch of Lawson Cloud Services on Amazon's EC2 cloud infrastructure. But analysts describe it as a defensive move that falls short of a true software-as-a-service (SaaS) offering. Infor also has a cloud strategy but it is based on Microsoft's Azure platform. Infor seems much better placed to weather the current storm. It is a private company unlike Nasdaq-listed Lawson, which has activist investor Carl Icahn on its shareholder register. Infor also has a dependable if unimaginative business model that consists of buying up the mature product lines of one-time competitors and milking their customer base for maintenance revenues. This is what it intends to do with Lawson's 4,500 customers and given Infor's record, the execution risk seems minimal. Lawson shareholders no doubt hope Infor's unsolicited approach will flush out a higher rival bid. A few years ago a counter-offer from Oracle would have been almost certain. But these days, enterprise software is increasingly seen as a mature, low-growth sector and even Oracle will think twice before overpaying.

Browsium offers solutions for running legacy software on ageing IE6

Microsoft boasts that the forthcoming Internet Explorer 9 is its best browser yet. But what happens if your business runs applications that only work with Microsoft's decade-old Internet Explorer 6? US start-up Browsium has the answer. Its UniBrows software runs these "legacy" applications in a tab on Internet Explorer 8 — and on IE9 when it gets officially released. Many businesses have old custom-built web applications that were developed for IE6 either by in-house staff or by third parties who are no longer in business. To convert them to work with newer browsers would be both costly and time-consuming, and so businesses take the easy way out and keep using IE6. But IE6 does not run on Windows 7 and so companies that stay on IE6 are obliged to keep running the ageing Windows XP operating system, even though Microsoft ended mainstream support for Windows XP in 2009. This problem has been known for some time and while there are ways to support the IE6 browser on Windows 7 — Symantec offers a virtualisation product, for example — Browsium's solution seems a lot simpler. But it is also expensive, with a \$5,000 base licence fee plus \$5 for each PC that uses the product. IE6 currently has an 11 per cent share of the browser market, down from 18 per cent a year ago, according to web analytics firm Net Applications. IE8 has a 35 per cent share.

Pentaho launches latest version of BI software

US software company Pentaho has announced the latest version of its open-source business intelligence software, Pentaho BI Suite 3.8. One of the new features is interactive dashboards, which allow dynamic filtering of the data displayed in the pie-charts and other widgets embedded in a dashboard. Pentaho has also added in-memory data caching, which improves performance when working with large paginated reports. The company argues that the new features in this latest release reduce the functionality gap between commercial open-source and proprietary BI products. Its enterprise-focused BI Suite is not free but Pentaho claims it can reduce licence costs by about 90 per cent when compared to a proprietary BI product.

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